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ABSTRACT

A cohort of students was monitored throughout their nine-year comprehensive school career to investigate social segregation in Swedish schools. The study began in the school year 1972-73 and the students came from six large municipalities: Stockholm, Botkyrka, Lidingo, Malmo, Linkoping, and Boras. It found that, despite reforms allowing all pupils, regardless of their social class, to attend the same type of school, differences in educational results continue to reflect social status. Student performance in class and on standardized tests differed according to status and, when making choices for senior level grades, higher social class students tended to choose a more academic combination of subjects. These differences are governed by the students' social identity, which they acquire as a result of social segregation in school and elsewhere. School segregation may simply be based on residential segregation. But even the student welfare institution, intended to deal with problems not addressed within educational activities, is overtly discriminatory. It was found, for example, that low achievers in high status classes obtained more support than the corresponding students in low status classes. Practices of the pupil welfare institution result in referring problems to individual differences between students, and not to the discriminatory treatment which schools apparently accord to students of different social classes. (KH)

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The "Social segregation in comprehensive schools in Sweden" project has been succeeded by the "A study of segregation in comprehensive schools" project with the research group following the same pupils through senior level.

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Introduction and premises

The project "Social segregation in comprehensive schools" and its sequel "A study of segregation in comprensive schools" have involved monitoring a cohort of pupils throughout their 9-year compulsory comprehensive school career. The study began in the school year 1972/73, and the pupils came from six large municipalities in Sweden: Stockholm, Botkyrka, Lidingö, Malmö, Linköping and Borås. The study involves about 4 300 pupils altogether. The project has resulted in three main reports[1]. The first of these (1975) is a descriptive report containing statistical background data on the municipalities and school management districts involved, together with descriptions of the historical development of the various localities. Report 2 (1977) deals with the pupils' junior level career and is based on register data and on interviews of their form masters/mistresses in grade 3. The third report (1980), dealing with the pupils' intermediate level career, is based on register data and on interviews of pupil welfare staff and school management.

The starting point of the project has been the differences in people's material and social capacity for influencing their own situation and that of others. These differences are not randomly distributed but are the result of the social conditions in which people live, which in turn are shaped by the individual person's position in the production process.

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(1) Andersson, B., Arnman G., Jönsson I. & Swedner K. (1975): Social segregation in elementary schools. Descriptive section. Preliminary version. Department of Sociology, University of Lund. (In Swedish)
Andersson B., Arnman G. & Jönsson I. (1977): Segregation and separate treatment in elementary schools. Department of Sociology, University of Lund. (In Swedish)
Andersson B., Arnman G. & Jönsson I. (1980): The necessity of separate treatment. A study of segregated school environments. Department of Sociology, University of Lund. (In Swedish)

Social differences

The widespread nature of these social differences has been made clear by our previous reports. The most important findings from the pupils' junior level career can be summed up as follows.

- about one-third of the pupils attended rigidly segregated classes, i.e. classes where over 75 per cent of the pupils come from social classes I-IIB, and classes where less than 25 per cent of the pupils belong to these social classes.
- The pupils' achievements varied according to social background and the composition of the school class. Pupils from higher social classes did better in standardized achievement tests and had higher marks than pupils from lower social classes. The greater the predominance of pupils from social class III, the poorer were the average achievements of the school class concerned.
- Streaming was more frequent in classes dominated by social class III pupils.[1] Social class III pupils tended more often to be placed in a "low group", even if they had the same level of achievement as pupils from superior social classes.
- Special instruction was divided up in such a way that it was easier for low achievers in high status classes to obtain help than for pupils with the corresponding achievement level in low status classes to do so.
- Classes dominated by lower social classes had a higher pupil turnover rate.

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(1) Division of pupils into homogeneous ability groups.

- Pupils in low status classes had on average had two teachers during junior level, as against one teacher for high status classes.

- The proportion of immigrant children was far higher in classes dominated by lower social classes than in classes where higher social classes predominated.

- Immigrant pupils' achievements were lower in classes dominated by lower social classes than in classes dominated by higher social classes.

There used to be manifest differences in the treatment which schools accorded pupils from different social classes. There existed two parallel but completely different school systems, viz elementary school (folkskola) and a course of studies preparing for gymnasium entrance. These two types of schooling were addressed to different social and economic groups, and they had different goals, methods and cognitive content. Since then, compulsory schooling has been reformed in such a way that all pupils attend the same type of school and are to receive the same education within this framework. It transpires, however, that differences in educational results are still of the same kind as existed in the former system of parallel schools, with its social grading effect. Pupils from lower social strata invariably derive less benefit from school, a lower educational level. The fact that certain pupils do better than others is attributed to individual differences - ability, interest, ambition etc. - and is seen as the result of segregation practised by schools and the community at large. Segregation of pupils from different social strata, however, is clearly apparent in socially segregated school environments.

In our studies we have shown the social composition of school classes in the areas investigated to vary in such a way that one is justified in speaking of social segregation. The classes

we have investigated come from metropolitan areas with more or less pronounced patterns of residential segregation. Pupils are distributed between different classes, schools and school management districts in such a way that the pupil structure faithfully reflects this residential segregation. Classes are organized according to two main principles: the neighbourhood principle and the principle of the integrated class. Both these principles impede the realization of the comprehensively composed class.

Integration is much more common in high status school classes. Our findings show that about 65 per cent of the children in these classes attended the same class for their first six years at school, as against roughly 42 per cent of the pupils in low status classes. Nearly all high status classes (90 per cent approx.) are stable, i.e. less than seven pupils left them during the intermediate level grades, while less than a quarter of the low status classes have this low turnover rate. The implications of such turnover also vary from one social class or environment to another. Pupil turnover mainly involves children from social classes IIB and III, i.e. children of manual workers and junior salaried employees, categories which often have to migrate because of changes in the labour market. Residentially these social classes are concentrated within new housing areas. There is a relatively heavy concentration of families with similar social positions, high mobility and relatively insecure incomes and working conditions. Migration is mainly an example of social segregation or discrimination on the part of the community at large, though the picture also includes internal shifts between school classes, for example in connection with changes of level.

The second report from the project, on the pupils' junior level career, also shows that mobility among the pupils is matched by mobility among their teachers. When pupils are constantly being changed, friendships in class disrupted and un-

easiness in the class aggravated, a difficult working situation results for teachers and pupils alike. In some municipalities a large proportion of the teaching staff are unqualified and there are serious recruitment problems.

Standardized achievement tests and marks

In the course of the project, data have been collected concerning the pupils' results in standardized achievement tests and the marks gained by them in grades 3 and 6. The average achievements of the various social classes hardly changed at all during this three-year period. In grade 6, the average score for social class I pupils is still about one unit above that of the social class III pupils. The following table shows the pupils' average standardized achievement test scores for Swedish in grade 6.

Table 1.
Average standardized achievement test scores for Swedish in grade 6. By social classes and types of school class.(1)

Social class	High status	Above average status	Below average status	Low status	Total
I	3.6	3.7	3.3	(3.5)	3.6
IIA	3.2	3.3	3.3	2.8	3.3
IIB	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1
III	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.5	2.7
Uncod.	3.1	2.8	2.3	2.4	2.6
Total	3.3	3.2	2.9	2.6	3.0

(1) The classes investigated have been divided up according to the proportion of pupils coming respectively from social classes I, IIA and IIB. In high status classes, at least 75 per cent of the pupils come from these social classes. Less than 25 per cent do so in low status classes. The two intermediate types have a pupil structure in which the superior social classes constitute 50-75 per cent (above average) or 25-49 per cent (below average).

The differences in average achievement are reflected by the standard deviation of the scores. Social class III pupils include a much larger proportion of low achievers, i.e. pupils with ones and twos (the two lowest awards), compared with social class I pupils. Conversely, the proportion of high achievers (fours and fives, the two highest awards) is substantially higher among social class I pupils than among social class III pupils.

When marks are awarded for the term's work, the superior social classes are favoured at the expense of working class children. Teachers are more disposed to give upper class pupils higher marks than the standardized achievement tests indicate. This applies both in grade 3 and in grade 6. The tendency is more pronounced in Swedish than in mathematics. Swedish is more concerned with socially related norms, values, attitudes and linguistic usage than mathematics, which has a more exactly quantifiable cognitive content. Teachers, most of whom have middle class backgrounds, can be expected to have more understanding for the non-quantifiable knowledge possessed by middle class pupils than for that possessed by working class pupils.

Roughly 60 per cent of the pupils in grade 6 have the same standardized achievement test score for Swedish as they obtained in grade 3. About 60 per cent of the pupils also obtain the same marks in both grades. The number of pupils gaining higher marks in grade 6 than in grade 3 exceeds the number improving their standardized achievement test scores during the same period, which suggests that marks tend to rise during intermediate level in relation to standardized achievement test results.

Relatively speaking, the low achievers in grade 3 had improved their results more than pupils with higher levels of achievement. About 55 per cent of the pupils gaining a one in grade 3 did better in grade 6. Only about 9 per cent of the pupils

gaining a four in grade 3 had risen to a five in grade 6. Table 2 shows the average grade 6 results of pupils gaining ones, twos etc. in grade 3. As will be seen, improved results are commonest at the lowest levels. At the higher levels, it is only social class I children whose results are roughly as good as or better than those achieved in grade 3, while children from lower social classes have lost ground.

Table 2.
Average grade 6 results in relation to standardized achievement test scores for Swedish in grade 3

Standardized achievement test scores for Swedish in grade 3	I	IIA	IIB	III	Uncod.	Total
1	(1.0)	(1.0)	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.7
2	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.2
3	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.6	3.0
4	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.3	3.8
5	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.3	3.8	4.5

Pupils' choices for senior level

At the end of intermediate level, the pupils have to make certain choices for the senior level grades. These choices imply formal distribution between various educational routes and future social positions. With certain combinations the pupil still has an unrestricted range of options when he leaves comprehensive school, while other choices eliminate the possibility of taking certain lines of upper secondary school. Courses and subjects focussing more specifically on further education are more commonly chosen by pupils from superior social classes than by pupils from social class III. The following table shows the choices of pupils from various social classes prior to senior level.

Table 3
Percentage language preferences and percentages opting in grade 6 for special English and/or mathematics courses and for language + special course in English and mathematics. By social class.

Social class	Chose lang's	Chose Eng. sp.	Chose math. sp.	Chose Eng. sp. + math. sp.	Chose lang's + Eng. sp + math. sp.	No. of pupils in each social class
I	89.9	94.2	90.1	89.0	84.4	582
IIA	81.1	89.1	86.9	83.2	73.4	549
IIB	70.9	82.1	77.0	70.9	59.6	856
III	57.5	69.9	64.6	56.0	41.9	1.670
Uncod	60.3	64.6	61.9	51.4	42.0	333
Total	68.6	78.2	73.9	67.4	56.2	3.990

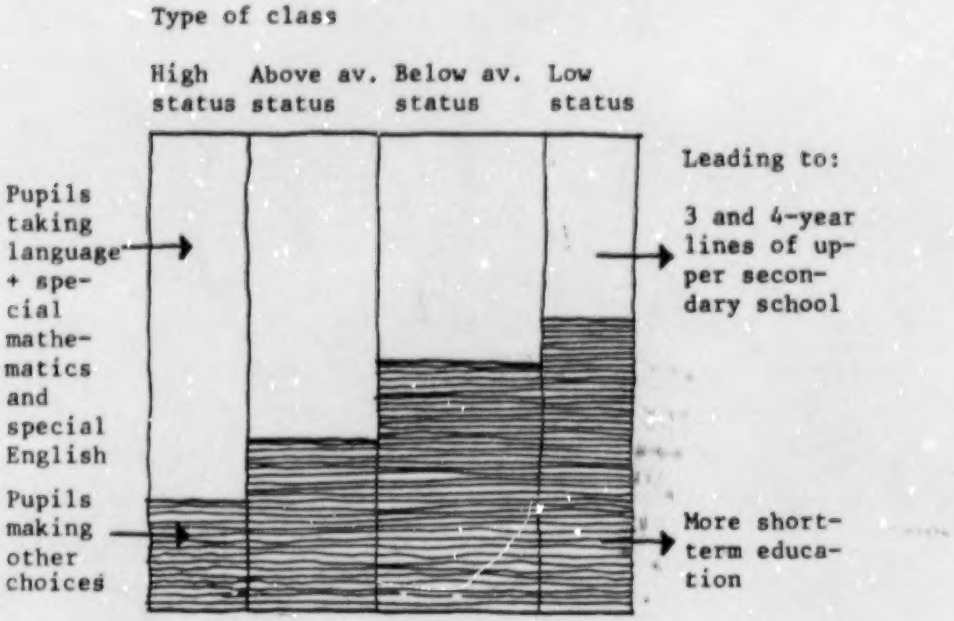
Thus the most academic combination (language + special English and mathematics courses) is chosen twice as often by social class I children as by social class III children (84.4 and 41.9 per cent respectively). The different preference patterns of the different social classes are not connected with differences in their levels of achievement. Social class I pupils opt for "theoretical" studies even if they have low marks, while social class III pupils only choose theoretical studies if they have high marks.

Selection for higher education becomes apparent at an early stage in the school organization and is prepared more or less overtly throughout the pupils' school career. This became apparent, for example, when we studied streaming in grade 3. During the junior level grades, a class is divided into groups for what are termed resource periods, and this results in streaming. In this connection, working class children tended more and more to be placed in "low groups", even if their achievements were on a level with those of classmates from superior social strata.

Analyses of the development of pupils' achievements between grades 3 and 6 and of the pupils' choices for senior level show that early school results have an important bearing on the pupils' subsequent choices. Pupils with good school results in grade 3 opted for theoretical studies in grade 6, even if their level of achievement had declined during intermediate level.

The pupils' choices are governed by the social identity which they acquire as a result of social segregation in school and elsewhere. At senior level the children are segregated on the basis of the courses and subjects they have chosen. During the senior level grades they will spend at least a third of their lessons in groups conferring different cognitive content and formal qualifications for the future. Options result at senior level in a division between an upper and a lower school route, the counterpart of the division of the parallel school system into folkskola and gymnasium entrance. The following diagram shows the proportions of pupils in the various types of school class taking the "high road" and "low road" respectively. The blank area uppermost corresponds to the proportion of pupils taking the theoretical combination opening the way to three and four-year lines of upper secondary school.

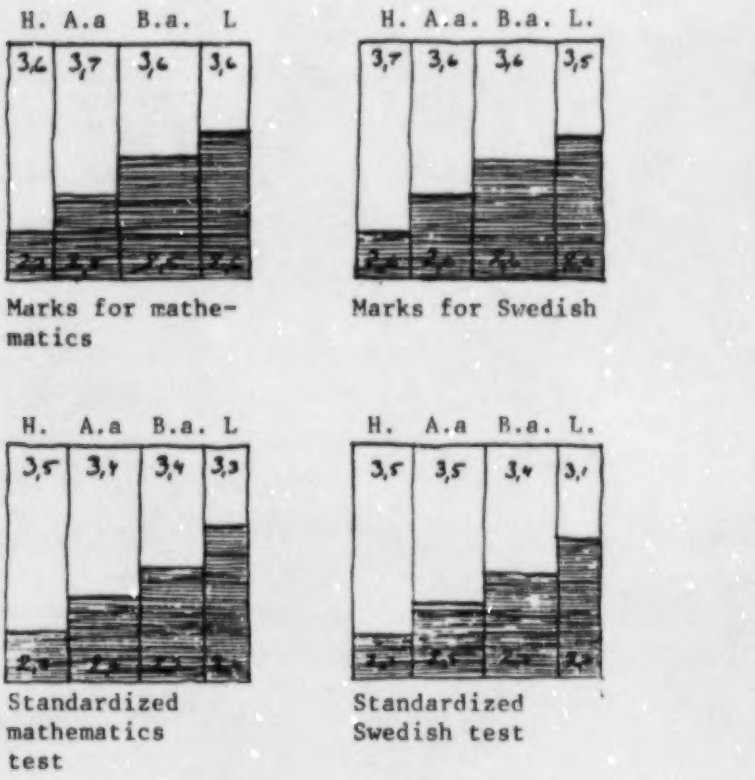
Figure 1. Proportion of pupils in each class opting for theoretical combinations



Within each type of class, it is pupils from the upper social classes that most commonly opt for theoretical studies. Thus differentiation carries social segregation one step further. At senior level, certain groups of pupils will consist almost entirely of children from social class I and II, others almost entirely of working class children.

What is more, these options result in distinct streaming. In the charts below, we have entered the average standardized achievement test scores and marks of the various categories for Swedish and mathematics.

Figure 2. Average standardized achievement test scores and marks for Swedish and mathematics gained by pupils opting for theoretical studies and by pupils making other choices.



H = high status, A.a. = above average status, B.a. = below average status, L = low status

Problem policy and pupil welfare

Another field of inquiry in our latest report concerns pupil welfare and attitudes to problems in school. The official school attitude towards problems is based on the idea of comprehensive school behaving equally towards all pupils and of problems consisting in the adjustment difficulties of individual pupils. Pupil welfare, special instruction and other arrangements for dealing with problems are based on the presupposition that certain pupils have individual difficulties

consisting of disabilities, idiosyncrasies or social or mental problems. Our analysis is based on the supposition that schools are bound to create a certain number of problem pupils. Schools aim at achieving different results, different educationel levels, corresponding to different positions in the social structure. These educational levels justify the existence of different living conditions for different social strata.

Problems cannot be objectively established. Instead they consist of antitheses between what can be roughly defined as desired and perceived states. Problems as defined in the school community are usually based on what school staff, primarily teachers, have experienced as problems. Schools have developed special machinery for dealing with disturbances and conflicts. This machinery includes pupil welfare and special instruction, involving special resources, specially trained staff and, to some extent, special concepts and methods. The problem-processing machinery is socio-political in character, i.e. it supplements pedagogical activities while at the same time constituting a corrective instrument against certain undesirable consequences of school activities.

The quantiative section of the study shows that the proportion of problem pupils mentioned in different types of school class is roughly the same irrespective of social structure - about 10 per cent. Nor is there any substantial difference between social classes (9.5 - 12.3 per cent in social class I and III respectively). The group of unclassified pupils deviates, however, with about 18 per cent problem pupils. We know that this pupil category consists to a great extent of children from single-parent families, immigrant children, children who have recently moved into an area, children whose parents are unemployed etc.

Syntheses of the problem descriptions prepared by school social workers show that pupil problems are similar in kind

regardless of the social surroundings in which the social workers operate. Certain types of problem, however, are more common in some areas than others. Thus school difficulties are more commonly mentioned in the above average and high status classes, while psychosomatic problems are more commonly mentioned in below average and low status classes.

The problems referred to pupil welfare staff have usually been initiated by the teachers. Most problems have started as disruptions of order in school. The most common disruptions are "uneasiness" in class, antipathies between classmates, aggressive behaviour, abuse of drugs and alcohol, and truancy. Different school environments have differnt degrees of tolerance where disruptions are concerned. What is considered normal in one school environment may be regarded as a serious problem in another.

The problems are related to individual pupils. Even if the pupil welfare organization is consulted because of disruptions affecting an entire class, problem processing is still usually geared to individual pupils. The causes of problems are often sought in children's individual characteristics, family circumstances etc. Pupil welfare staff have very little opportunity of working with problems in the children's family situation and social environment.

Needless to say, the resources and methods available for problem processing in schools also determine what matters are raised as problems. The lack of pupil welfare resources means, for example, that only a portion of the perceived problems can be tackled, usually those which in the environment concerned are experienced as most acute and constitute the gravest disruptions. The problem-processing measures at the disposal of the pupil welfare organization imply some sort of restoration of the pupil to the order prevailing in the school. Earlier types of school provided facilities for the direct expulsion of pupils who did not fit in. Measures of this kind, e.g. an

adapted course of studies, still exist today, but on the whole the aim is for problem pupils to be integrated in normal teaching.

The special instruction resource is definitely the largest resource which schools have at their disposal for dealing with problems affecting individual pupils. What happens is that an extra teacher resource is provided for individual pupils and, usually, the pupil in question is separated from his class, one way or another. The officially declared purpose is to help pupils who cannot cope with the regular instruction. Pupils must be kept in their ordinary class if possible. The resource must be flexibly applied and its results evaluated. Our interviews of pupil welfare staff and school management showed, however, that the clinic (or "sin bin") was still the most common recourse, that the resource was committed to the same pupils for term after term, and that evaluation seldom amounted to more than a discussion of the return of pupils to their ordinary classes.

Our study of the distribution of special instruction in grade 3 showed that low achievers in high status classes obtained more support than the corresponding pupils in low status classes. This could be attributed to the resource being fairly equally distributed between schools, whereas needs, measured in terms of achievement, varied a great deal.

The grade 6 study showed that a change had occurred in the distribution of special instruction between types of class; the low achievers (i.e. those scoring ones or twos in the standardized achievement test) receive roughly the same amount of special instruction regardless of the type of class they attend, and the predominantly social class III school classes tend if anything to have more special instruction. Roughly a quarter of the low achievers in the high status classes received special instruction in grade 6, as against one-third of the same pupil category in the low status classes.

Although the special instruction resource is devoted to a great extent to pupils who are low achievers, and although today this resource is more heavily concentrated on classes with the largest numbers of low achievers, it is also used for high achievers. The level achievement in Swedish varies between the pupils receiving assistance according to their social background and the type of class they attend. The average standardized achievement test scores of pupils in high status classes receiving special instuction is 2.00 as against 1.64 for the same category of pupil in low status classes. The social class I pupils in high status classes who receive special instruction score on average 2.40 in the standardized achievement test in Swedish as against 1.56 for social class III pupils in low status classes.

The special instruction resource is intended to be deployed with maximum flexibility. About 8 per cent of our cohort of pupils received special instruction both in grade 3 and in grade 6. Working class pupils are the group most extensively receiving special instruction in both grades (13 per cent approx.).

School problem-processing routines - pupil welfare and special instruction - are overtly discriminatory. Activities are made to focus on pupils with problems, and special resources, methods and working procedures are available. Pupil welfare originated as a reform of social policy, a means of dealing with individual problems and conflicts in comprehensive school which could no longer be solved within the framework of educational activities. But the pupil welfare institution is also a way of propagating and consolidating the view of problems according to which problems in school are referred back to individual differences between the pupils and not to the discriminatory treating which schools accord pupils from different social classes.

The treatment of school problems and individual personal problems due to individual characteristics or to factors in the domestic environment obscures the fact that schools operate in different ways for different social classes of pupil and that the problems discerned are related to different codes of rules - the rules applying to the pupils who are able to utilize the school system and the problems applying to those who have to accept school all the same. The school system is constructed in such a way that only some pupils can obtain rewards, while others have to be unsuccessful. As we see it, the vital differences are inherent in the school system, not in the pupils. The methods, language, content, values etc. of the school system are not geared to the conditions and experience of working class children but reflect the values, conditions and experience of the middle class.